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GENERAL DEBATE

Letter dated 12 October 1993 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions of my Government, I have the honour to convey the following comments concerning the statement of His Excellency Mr. Geza Jeszenszky, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary, made in the general debate at the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly on 30 September 1993.

The part of the statement of Minister Jeszenszky relating to developments in the former Yugoslavia contains a number of flagrant falsehoods and insinuations with explicit intent to vilify the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbia and the Serbian people as a whole. In the interest of truth, the Government of Yugoslavia would like to advance the facts in connection with the allegations contained in the statement of the Foreign Minister.

Allegation 1: "As a country immediately adjacent to the crisis area, Hungary has sought to avoid being dragged into this conflict, while, at the same time, continuing to voice her principled position on the crisis and abiding by the relevant decisions of the international community."

Even before the war broke out in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, Hungary had been involved in illegal arms shipments to Slovenia and Croatia, thus directly fuelling their insurgent and secessionist ambitions.

At the height of war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, despite the arms embargo imposed on the former Yugoslavia pursuant to Security Council resolution 713 (1991) of 25 September 1991 Hungary persisted with those illegal activities and became one of the major centres for funnelling arms to war-torn areas. Some of the most blatant examples that caught the attention of the world media include the so-called "Kalashnikov affair"; deliveries of MIG combat aircraft to Croatia; and major arms shipments impounded in Maribor, Slovenia,

originating from Hungary. Only recently, in Szegedin, a Hungarian town close to the border with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, an arms workshop, which procured weapons to the territory of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, has been uncovered.

Illegal arms deliveries to the secessionist republics of the former Yugoslavia have continued despite official assurances from the Hungarian side to the contrary, including assurances that all measures would be taken with a view to preventing it.

Allegation 2: "One has to reckon with the fact that this crisis is not limited to the war-torn areas of Bosnia and Croatia. It festers in Serbia proper where there is growing pressure on the different ethnic communities inhabiting the country, including the Hungarian community in Vojvodina. In this formerly autonomous province, the successive waves of persecution and discrimination have already significantly reduced the size as well as the proportion of the Hungarian minority. There continues to be a constant threat of a further massive influx of refugees into Hungary."

Allegations of any pressure towards minorities, including Hungarian minorities, in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, are unjustified and utterly malicious. All minorities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and consequently the Hungarian one, enjoy the same rights as other citizens of Yugoslavia, without any discrimination whatsoever. In addition, they are entitled to additional protection on the basis of specific minority rights, which by far exceed the highest standards of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Those are guaranteed by the Constitutions both of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia.

In order to promote the status of national minorities, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is one of the few countries in Europe that has established a Ministry for Human and Minority Rights. This Ministry is headed by a member of the Hungarian minority.

The children of the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia receive education in their mother tongue from kindergarten to high-school age. On the other hand, minorities in Hungary, including members of the Serbian minority there, are in a more precarious position since they have been enabled to receive education in their mother tongue only up to a certain grade and in mainly non-essential subjects. As a consequence, the members of the minorities in Hungary, including the children of the Serbian minority, have been compelled to communicate in the Hungarian language only.

Lasting solutions have still not been found concerning the status of schools in the Serbian language in Hungary regarding buildings, teachers and financing.

The recently adopted law on minorities in Hungary has been enacted without adequate consultation with members of minorities living there. The law does not truly promote the status of minorities. For example, it does not contain even elementary guarantees for the use of the mother tongue in everyday life and does not regulate the question of financing of education in the native language of minorities.

The insinuations that imply that Vojvodina has ceased to be an autonomous province are absolutely baseless. The Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and of the Republic of Serbia guarantee Vojvodina and Kosovo and Metohija the status of autonomous provinces which fully protect the rights of national minorities that live there.

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia defines Serbia as a State of all its citizens. It provides that "Freedoms and rights of man and the citizen are limited only by equal freedoms and rights of others". It implies freedom of national, religious and political expression. All citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia are equal in their rights and duties and enjoy equal protection before the State and other organs. The Constitution guarantees the freedom of the press and other means of public information, as well as expression of national, cultural and other affiliations.

The exact data on the situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia compared to that in Hungary portray a highly different picture.

As for institutions in culture and education, in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, primary education in Hungarian is being carried out in 29 communities, i.e. in 120 schools. According to 1992 statistics, there were 26,000 pupils attending schools in their mother (Hungarian) tongue.

Concerning junior high school institutions, 27 schools conduct classes in the Hungarian language. As for high level and university levels, there are seven faculties, academies and high schools that perform classes in Hungarian. The scientific research conducted at universities includes 300 scientists of Hungarian nationality.

Regarding cultural life, there are 2 professional theatres, 100 artistic troops and other institutions performing and functioning in Hungarian. Forum Publishing House publishes about 15 books in Hungarian a year. In 1991, they issued 28 editions in Hungarian.

In the field of public information, there are 5 dailies (Magyar Szo was established as early as 1944), around 70 magazines, including those for children and youth, as well as bulletins and a large number of local papers printed in Hungarian, despite great difficulties currently being experienced due to the sanctions. The radio and television studio Novi Sad broadcasts whole-day programmes in Hungarian in addition to 13 local radio stations throughout Vojvodina. Total footage of the programmes of television studio Novi Sad in Hungarian is 40,000 minutes a year.

The Hungarian language and alphabet are used in 31 municipalities in Vojvodina. Simultaneous interpretation into five languages, including Hungarian, is provided at Vojvodina Assembly sessions, and deputies can address the Assembly in their own language. The party of ethnic Hungarians "Democratic Union of Vojvodina Hungarians" is an organization that takes an active part in parliamentary life at all levels.

It is a fact that a certain number of citizens from the former Yugoslavia, including minorities, Hungarian as well, driven by the winds of war and worsening life conditions in the wake of unjust and unfounded sanctions imposed

against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, have left the country. As a neighbouring country, Hungary was naturally the closest refuge. Some of them in a very short period of time left for other European countries, whereas the members of the Hungarian minority naturally decided in the greatest numbers to stay in Hungary.

In every State based on the rule of law and democratic principles, in addition to rights, each citizen also has certain duties, such as respect for the law, the performance of military service, payment of taxes, etc. The members of the national minorities not only enjoy equal rights, but naturally they have the same duties as well.

Article 63 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia states that "The defence of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia shall be the right and duty of every citizen", whereas paragraph 1 of Article 65 of the Constitution states that "Everyone shall be obliged to observe the Constitution and law and other regulations and general enactments".

The Hungarian minority in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been subjected to overwhelming pressures from the official Hungarian institutions and authorities, feeding their fears that they allegedly face extermination and assimilation in Yugoslavia. The fact of the matter is that many members of the Hungarian minority left the country in order to avoid military service. In doing so they have demonstrated disloyalty towards the country in which they live and enjoy all civil rights and duties.

Hungary is obviously seeking to distort those facts and intentionally blur their essence.

Owing to the Security Council sanctions introduced against Yugoslavia, which Hungary also advocated and sponsored, the living standards of all citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, regardless of their religion, nationality or political persuasion, have dramatically worsened. No doubt members of the national minorities have been equally affected by the disastrous effects of the sanctions. The Hungarian position that its policy towards neighbouring countries always takes into account the well-being of its minority, has thus been contested.

Allegation 3: "In the conditions prevailing in Serbia and Montenegro, just as in other parts of the former Yugoslavia, it is of utmost importance to seek adequate international protection for these ethnic communities and national minorities".

When discussing the need for international protection of minority rights, it is the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that should seek adequate international protection of the Serbian minority living in Hungary. It can in no way be Hungary - the country in which there are instances of rising racial intolerance and xenophobia and a State that questions the very existence of minorities in its territory and very neatly pursues the policy of assimilation employing the means of which it accuses others. A disturbing example of that is the lack of official reaction to the desecration of the Serbian cemetery in the Hungarian town of Bata.

It is not understandable that no census information is available in regard to the number of members of national minorities in Hungary. It is even necessary to obtain approval by the official organs of the State if new-born babies are to be given non-Hungarian names. Films intended for the minorities are subtitled in Hungarian.

The above allegations of Minister Jeszenszky are in contravention of the officially proclaimed Hungarian policy of good-neighbourly relations to which the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia attaches particular attention. They certainly cannot contribute to the promotion of bilateral relations between the two countries. The interference in internal affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by neighbouring Hungary runs contrary to the basic principles of CSCE and the Charter of the United Nations, and Yugoslavia most resolutely rejects it. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia wishes good relations with all its neighbours, but it will most energetically resist each interference into its internal affairs.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 9.

(Signed) Dragomir DJOKIC
Ambassador
Charge d'affaires a.i.